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# Spanish historic archives' use of websites as a management transparency vehicle

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**Abstract** Against the backdrop of Spain's Transparency Act, this article discusses the presence or otherwise of a series of document types, proposed as management-related transparency indicators, on 61 (8 national and 53 provincial) historic archive websites. Although examples of good practice were identified, the information provided was found to be scant, in particular as regards lines of action, organisational objectives and yearly reports. The information most commonly provided on the websites included the collection classification chart, service use regulations and citizen charters. The inference drawn was that archives, so intently focused on their role in the application of the Act by the organisations they serve, neglect their own administrative obligations in respect of its provisions. The recommendation is that as government-funded and subsidised public service institutions, historic archives should exercise transparency by furnishing the information stipulated in the Act on their websites.

**Keywords** Historic archives · Spain · Transparency · Indicators · Management

## Introduction

In Spain, the Act on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance (hereinafter referred to as LTAIPBG, Ley de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información Pública y Buen Gobierno) (Spain, LTAIPBG), applicable from the

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December 2014 launch of the Government's transparency website, has introduced sweeping change. Public bodies and institutions are now required to publicise information of interest to citizens, guarantee the right of access to public information and respond to whatsoever request for information, providing it does not clash with other protected interests. The Act requires the subjects included in its scope to publish information on their purpose and duties, applicable legislation, organisational structure, planning tools and performance assessments. In Chapter II on active publicity, it urges public authorities to periodically publish and update all pertinent information to guarantee the transparency of their activity. Institutional, organisational and planning information (Art. 6) in particular, along with facts of legal relevance (Art. 7) and economic, budgetary and statistical data (Art. 8) must be published on their websites.

Interest in application of the LTAIPBG is attested to by the transparency assessments made by non-governmental institutions, which base their measurements on indicators designed to the requisites laid down in the Act. Transparency assessments of a number of public and private institutions conducted by Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia, for instance, are contributing decisively to creating a transparency culture and identifying best practice benchmarks. The institutions assessed include universities (most recently, by Martín Cavanna and Barrio 2017), museums and political parties.

Researchers in fields with an interest in the LTAIPBG (law, economics, journalism, information and documentation) have conducted studies analysing public authority compliance with its provisions (Beltrán and Martínez 2016; Moreno et al. 2017). To date, application of the LTAIPBG has been shown to be subject to many constraints, at both the central and local government levels.

Giménez Chornet (2012) defines public service transparency as citizens' ability to access any manner of information, in whatsoever medium, generated by institutions in fulfilment of their duties. Transparency, which is related to accountability, trust and credibility, lays the grounds for citizen awareness of how institutions working and manage their funds. It can be said to exist when institutions furnish information on their administration and results, justify their action and render accounts to those directly concerned or their stakeholders. These practices, characteristic of democratic systems, are rooted in the right to know where and how public funds are applied (efficacy and efficiency). In today's ongoing crisis, transparency is a value on the rise, in particular in light of the many instances of misappropriation of public funds revealed in recent years.

Transparency also has beneficial effects on organisations' results and staff, as it fosters greater efficiency (Cunil Grau 2006, pp. 27–28). According to Bernstein (2016, pp. 3–4), 'In management and organization theory, the concept of transparency has proven to be a powerful aggregate term for a number of constructs that are of interest for their effects on employee and organizational performance: monitoring, process visibility, surveillance, disclosure'.

Websites are a powerful communication and transparency tool for interactively sharing and publicising information. They are platforms for an organisation's corporate identity in its dealings with counterparties and for publicity. As the LTAIPBG itself signifies, they should be the main vehicle for transparency and rendering

accounts, describing not only what is done and how, but also the results. The use of e-government and new social media services as an avenue for interacting with government is recommended to enhance transparency and access to governmental information (Jaeger and Bertot 2010; Flyverbom 2016).

Bertot et al. (2012) were among the first to examine how the interrelationships between ICTs, social media and collaborative e-government can favour transparency. Archives' use of the web has been essentially associated with dissemination of information on their collections (Jiménez Hidalgo and Poves Pérez 2015).

The Transparency and Good Governance Council, in conjunction with the National Public Policy and Service Quality Evaluation Agency (Agencia Española de Evaluación de las Políticas Públicas y la Calidad de los Servicios, AEVAL), has developed a Transparency Assessment and Monitoring Method (Metodología de Evaluación y Seguimiento de la Transparencia, hereinafter referred to as MESTA) to determine Spanish public bodies' compliance with the provisions of the LTAIPBG (AEVAL 2016). Using a series of transparency criteria, it aims to measure compliance with legal obligations on active publicity and the right to access public information. Presented in March 2017, this methodology calls for adapting the practices deployed by some of the institutions subject to the Act: in the case of archives, the publication of the 'content' stipulated in the Act. For instance, if the Act provides that a body or institution must publish 'the regulations applicable thereto' (Art. 6.1), the first step would be to determine which document/s should be regarded to lay down the basic rules governing archive operation, as well as the regulations applicable to their areas of competence.

In line with the determination of the possible impact of the LTAIPBG has on institutions entrusted with distributing documentary information, namely libraries and archives, this study aims to identify the management information furnished by Spanish national and provincial historic archives on their websites.

## **Literature on management transparency in archives and parallelism with libraries**

Historic archives and libraries are cultural institutions that collect, conserve and disseminate documents for research, cultural and information purposes, although their purpose and the way they build their collections vary. As public services, they are also bound by the transparency regulations governing the institutions they serve. As government-funded bodies, they must pursue the fulfilment of their mission transparently. Compliance with that principle would indisputably raise societal esteem for these institutions. In Spain, they are both bound to comply with the transparency requirements laid down in the 2014 LTAIPBG (Chap. II, Active publicity), which entails publication of management-related documents on their websites. That is the type of transparency referred to here, and not to transparency which enables public access to the materials held by the archive. In the latter, which would call for a different approach, no parallels could be drawn between libraries and historic archives.

Responsible administration is understood as indispensable for satisfactory archive (or library) operation. Its components, planning, organisation, management and

control, lead to more rational decision-making and optimisation of the use of physical, technical, technological, financial and human resources. Archive and library management documents and data should be publicised voluntarily, irrespective of legal requirements, for the intents and purposes of evaluation. In terms of transparency, the sort of information required to understand an action or process does not include data alone: sources, arguments, reasons, timeframe... in short, context, are also needed. Just any information is not enough, particularly if it is imprecise and unorganised. Data on plans, programmes, projects, policies and service objectives favour citizen participation and prompt dialogue and interaction with public service users or customers. In these terms, transparency entails the explanation and understanding of institutional decisions and management reasoning. Such documents would certainly serve to enhance the understanding of archives' purposes, which include support for governmental transparency by uploading content on transparency websites to enable the organisations they serve to comply with the Act, and favouring the effective reuse of information.

A review of the literature on historic archive and library management transparency revealed a greater interest in libraries. Even so, very few studies have been published on library transparency, reports to the effect that website information on their governance has increased over time are indicative of their pursuit of voluntary transparency (Pacios 2003; Burke 2016). In Spain, university libraries afford access to a variety of types of documents on their management activities (Pacios 2016). More recent analyses have found that national public library websites tend to hold fewer documents than university library sites (Pacios et al. 2018).

Archive professionals have been induced by this transparency 'age' to reflect on and put forward contributions of great promise on what archives can do to create culturally transparent organisations that merit stakeholder trust. Transparency is the key to any organisation's future. The Spanish University Archives Conference's (Conferencia de Archiveros de las Universidades Españolas, CAU) Strategic Plan 2016–2019 includes transparency among its values (CRUE 2016, p. 1) in the following terms: 'we provide interested parties with pertinent, open and transparent information truthfully, precisely and neutrally within legal limits'. That is the approach adopted in some papers that seek to establish a transparency culture in the public bodies with which archives are affiliated (Giménez Chornet 2012; Neira Barral 2016; Zambrano 2016). They deem that guaranteed, sound and truthful public information is requisite to greater governmental transparency (Sancho 2013). Other studies regard access to information as the essential element for the rigorous implementation of political and governmental transparency in Spain (Camacho 2014). No papers have been located, however, that advocate for transparency in archives, defined as resource management bodies, institutions or organisational units supervised by a senior official, normally with director status.

Educators teaching information unit (archive or library) management and seeking to create a transparency culture among students and future information professionals can readily find management-related documents (such as plans, budgets, projects, regulations and organisational charts) on library websites that illustrate how these institutions are managed. That cannot be said of Spanish archives, however, for which such documents, if they exist, are not available on the respective websites.

Like Spanish university libraries, Spanish university archives are the ones that provide access to the most extensive trove of documents that show future managers how practising professionals work. Training students through examples is yet another reason to encourage archives to include these documents on their websites. Active learning methods are an imperative to future professionals' acquisition of both management skills (Fernández March 2006) and the ability to adapt to the unrelenting change affecting the profession (ALIA 2014).

The scant availability of administration- and management-related documents may be a matter of attitude. In the context of 'divergent traditions and common concerns' between archives and libraries, McCrank (1986) noted that the 'Society of American Archivists generally pays insufficient attention to administrative and management issues'. Although that situation has changed, as shown by studies on archive-library convergence prompted, among others, by the promise of enhanced efficiency of the two services (Duff et al. 2013), a comparison of accessibility to management-related documents in the two types of institutions shows libraries, university libraries in particular, to be much more open. A substantial divide is also visible in searches for 'archive administration' or 'archive management' in specialised databases. The articles retrieved discuss how archive materials should be organised and inventoried to make them available to administrators, researchers, the public or any combination of the three or deal with duration, digitisation and preservation, but not with the matter referred to here: documents and data pertinent to decision-making generated by the archive as institution or organisational unit. These search results may be biased, however, due to a common error identified by Heredia Herrera (2007, p. 21), who proposed that a distinction should be drawn between archive as a systematic collection of documents and Archive as institution, explaining that the two are often confounded and recommending the use of the upper and lower case to differentiate them.

Despite the void in the literature, examples can be found of archives that furnish management-related documents. The UK National Archives' website is an example of good practice in the respects addressed hereunder. The 'About us' > 'Our role' page on their website groups archive management documents by type, under four categories: plans, policies, performance and projects. Users can visualise the archives' strategic plan for 2015–2019, objectives and priorities and digital strategy for 2017–2019; their selection, records collection and equality and diversity policies; and conservation, preservation and digital preservation projects (National Archives 2017). The page on 'Transparency' contains the following statement: 'We strive to be an open and transparent organisation. In addition to responding to government's requests for particular information to be published, we aim to proactively share as much information as possible and make it available on our website'. This page also contains year-by-year data on the institution's budget under the item 'How we spend public money'. All this information is a clear indication of the UK Archives' commitment to management transparency. Another example, in this case in South America, is the Brazilian National Archive. The links on its website to management-related documents such as yearly management reports, organisational charts, tendering contracts, partnering agreements, programmes and projects, digital conservation policies (Arquivo Nacional 2016) and spending attest to management transparency.

Its website also provides access to the Brazilian Government's transparency portal, a feature found on some Spanish sites as well.

The research questions posed for this study were:

- What sort of management-related documents are accessible on Spanish historic archives' websites?
- Do these institutions use their websites as a vehicle for management transparency?

## **National and provincial historic archives in Spain**

Eight of the 12 archives and document centres managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport through the Secretariat of State for Culture are historic and were consequently chosen for this study. Four of them were characterised properly as not being historical archives in light of the type of documents held, and consequently, they were not included. The research also covered 53 State-owned provincial historic archives managed by the autonomous regions (administrative territorial entities in Spain with a certain degree of legislative autonomy) where the respective provinces are located. For the sake of simplicity, these two types of institutions are, respectively, referred to hereunder as 'national' and 'provincial' archives.

The provincial historic archives were created on 12 November 1931 under a decree issued jointly by the erstwhile Ministries of Justice and Public Education and Fine Arts to 'concentrate historic documents at risk of loss due their present scatter in a host of institutions, archives and services throughout Spain'. According to the present Ministry's website, their mission is to custody and conserve the documentary heritage generated by regional and provincial services, making it accessible to citizens for research or in the exercise their rights as well as to governments themselves, as background for decision-making. They also custody a sizeable suite of small private collections (Flores Varela 2017). They provide a range of services that has widened over time and routinely includes access and information, documentary management, document queries and loans and specialised libraries. Their societal function is acknowledged, and they are associated with administrative transparency (Cruces Blanco 2006, p. 2). They combine cultural and educational activities (Cuadros Cavalla 2015) with other administrative and citizen information tasks.

Beginning in the nineteen nineties, archive systems were gradually geared to guaranteeing transparency, administrative management efficacy and citizens' rights. That entailed a gradual change in archives' affiliation with ministries or departments of culture and the development of systems falling under the aegis of regional departments of the presidency, justice, or law enforcement (Mijancos et al. 2014, p. 45). The Royal Decree on the Spanish Archive System stipulates with respect to their function that 'historic archives are the institutions entrusted with the custody, conservation and processing of collections pertaining to Spain's historic documentary heritage that reflect the State's historic trajectory or which are highly significant for their historic value, singular importance or international prominence. The archives pertaining to and managed by the central government under the aegis of the

Ministry of Culture are historic archives' (Spain, Ministerio de la Presidencia 2011). That means that the autonomous regions manage everyday affairs while the State continues to 'own' the collections and the buildings housing them, with the central government consequently assuming any works required beyond simple conservation. According to Flores Varela (2017), these archives continue to be a reminder of the exercise of territorial power.

Studies analysing the evolution, status and characteristics of the collections in State-owned archives have been published (López Gómez 2007; Laso Ballesteros 2009; Dávila Oliveda 2010), although none of those found addressed the archives' own institutional or organisational management. Other papers refer to staff duties and tasks, specifying that the director's include, among others, overseeing general administration; drafting plans, programmes and the budget; monitoring the allocations received; and presenting the archive's yearly objectives, report, statistics and assessments (Ferro Sánchez 2007; Alberch et al. 2015; Sanchis Moreno 2009).

The Deputy General Directorate of National Archives is the body entrusted with managing the national archives under the aegis of the Secretariat of State for Culture. The statistics on these archives published by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (Spain, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte 2016) include area and room capacity, document types, technical document processing, services offered, number of visitors and queries and activities organised. No information whatsoever is provided on their budgets, however.

Given that, contrary to the websites for national public libraries, no budgetary information was found in the Ministry's statistics on archives, a question on the subject was addressed to the Deputy General Directorate of National Archives from its website. In their reply, the Deputy General Directorate noted that the annual budget allocated to archives under their management is published in the *Official State Journal*. Similarly, the information on the budgets of the provincial historic archives managed by the autonomous regions is available in the respective official regional journals. This would not appear to be the most transparent approach to furnishing information on how Spanish archives spend and invest public funds, particularly since these institutions are known to formulate instruments that could be made available to citizens.

A review of the *Official State Journal* revealed that the budget allocated to archives in 2016 was 26.94 million euros, up from 25.55 million in 2015 to (+1.39 million) (Spain, Ministerio de Hacienda 2016). Even with that slight rise, these figures are much lower than the 65.7 million euros allocated to these institutions in 2009 (Spain, Ministerio de Hacienda 2009). That cutback must have had a severe impact on their projects and activities, although no proof of that inference could be located.

## Objective and method

This study aimed to determine the type of transparency documents that archives as organisational units publish on their websites. The transparency-related indicators used in the searches were based on the management documents published on



university library websites identified in an earlier study (Pacios 2016). Indicator was defined to mean the unit of information (document, data item or symbol) showing or specifying transparency intentionality. Each indicator was analysed and adapted as deemed suitable given the practice of the archive at issue, taking into consideration as well their presence on archives' websites and parallels with libraries' sites. As Table 1 shows, the 18 indicators were grouped under eight information categories: (1) Purpose of the service and objectives pursued; (2) Governing bodies and operating regulations; (3) Service offering; (4) Document collections; (5) Staff; (6) Results; (7) Financial information; (8) Membership in networks and other types of collaboration. An attempt was made to identify these indicators with the requirements on active publicity laid down in Sections 5 though 8 of the LTAIPBG.

The sample used to determine the presence of indicators included eight national archives managed by the Secretariat of State for Culture and 53 provincial archives managed by the respective autonomous region. All 61 institutions were essentially historic archives. A complete list of the institutions and their websites is provided in "Appendix". Historic archives are 'entities which, further to descriptive international standards on archives, include institutions, individuals and families that collect, conserve, organise, describe and propagate organic sets and collections of documents' (Spain, Ministerio de la Presidencia 2011) for research, cultural, information and administrative purposes.

**Table 1** Proposed transparency indicators grouped by information area

Information area	Indicator
1. Purpose of the service and objectives pursued	(A) <i>Mission statement</i> (B) <i>Strategic plan</i>
2. Governing bodies and operating regulations	(C) <i>Executive body (within the respective institution)</i> (D) <i>Regulations</i> (E) <i>Specific regulations on service operation</i> (F) <i>User duties and rights</i>
3. Service offering	(G) <i>Citizen charter</i>
4. Document collections	(H) <i>Document policies (such as e-document, e-archive, conservation and access management)</i> (I) <i>Collection classification or organisational chart</i>
5. Staff	(J) <i>Organisational chart</i> (K) <i>Staff directory</i>
6. Results	(L) <i>Management indicators (scoreboard)</i> (M) <i>Satisfaction surveys</i> (N) <i>Yearly report or report of activities</i> (O) <i>Distinctions, prizes, certifications</i>
7. Financial information	(P) <i>Budget</i> (Q) <i>Tender contracts and bidding</i>
8. Membership in networks and other types of collaboration	(R) <i>Networks with which the archive works and cooperates</i>

Searches on the websites of the archives included in the sample were conducted in June 2017. The data on the presence of indicators on each website were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet to compute the respective percentages and assess performance of the sample as a whole.

The presence of visible, accessible, up-to-date, comprehensible data, integrity and reusable, attributes regarded in earlier studies on libraries to constitute transparency, was taken into consideration when checking archives' websites for indicators, also pursuant to the LTAIPBG (Art. 11). As the paucity of documents and their dispersal on different web pages rendered this analysis difficult, the discussion below focuses on certain details associated with the indicators located and the pathways that had to be followed on the websites to find them. These attributes should be analysed after a larger number of management-related documents have been published on the websites to be able to draw more significant conclusions and put forward recommendations for improvement, as appropriate. Attributes such as visibility and quality have been analysed in earlier studies on provincial and national historic archives (Crespo 2007; Chaín Navarro and García González 2009; Sanz Caballero and Faba Pérez 2012).

## Results and discussion

National archives can be readily accessed from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport's website. The menu options 'Archives' and 'Archives and [document] centres' open a window that lists all the archives managed by the Secretariat of State for Culture as well as links to the State-owned provincial archives managed by the autonomous regions. A link is also provided to the Archive Census-Guide, an electronic directory listing the collections and services of archives in Spain and Latin America. The websites of all the provincial historic archives can be accessed with either pathway. Both national and provincial archives can consequently be regarded as easily accessible.

The websites for all eight national archives are designed to the same model. The menu bar contains the following tabs: Introduction, Services, Document collections, Databases, Activities, Virtual exhibitions and Related websites. The page contains no dedicated link that opens onto all the documents sought as transparency indicators, however, and the documents found were consistently scattered. Each of these sites also carries a link to the Spanish Government's transparency website, in compliance with one of the purposes of archives: to contribute to public institution transparency.

The websites for all 53 provincial historic archives can be accessed from their pages on the Ministry's site by selecting the respective autonomous region. The font size and position of the link to the Census-Guide render the pathway somewhat difficult to identify, however. Provincial archive website designs differ, depending on the region. Some, such as in the province of Álava, are modelled on the central government's sites. As in the Ministry's site, scatter, the most prominent characteristic of the indicators located, hindered identification and access.

The transparency indicator searches on national and provincial archive websites yielded the values listed in Table 2.

As the table shows, very few transparency indicators were found on the national and provincial archive websites, although significant differences between the two were identified as discussed below.

## Transparency in national archives

The presence of indicators was scant but uniform. Four were identified on all the websites.

### *(E) Specific regulations on service operation*

This document, identical for all the archives, lists the rules for document access and use in the researcher hall. Six websites include a guide with a brief history of the archive and its collections, as well as information on location and hours. The Simancas Archive website has a very extensive guide for researchers on archive history, collections and archivists (Plaza Bores 1992, p. 57).

**Table 2** Presence of indicators on national historic archive websites

Indicator	Presence on archive website	
	National (%)	Provincial (%)
<i>(A) Mission statement</i>	0	22.6
<i>(B) Strategic plan</i>	0	1.9
<i>(C) Executive body (within the respective institution)</i>	37.5	0.0
<i>(D) Regulations</i>	0	0.0
<i>(E) Specific regulations on service operation</i>	100	30.2
<i>(F) User duties and rights</i>	0	0.0
<i>(G) Citizen charter</i>	100	37.7
<i>(H) Document policies (such as e-document, e-archive, conservation and access management)</i>	0	1.9
<i>(I) Collection classification or organisational chart</i>	100	88.7
<i>(J) Organisational chart</i>	0	1.9
<i>(K) Staff directory</i>	100	22.6
<i>(L) Management indicators (scoreboard)</i>	0	0.0
<i>(M) Satisfaction surveys</i>	0	9.4
<i>(N) Yearly report or report of activities</i>	0	18.9
<i>(O) Distinctions, prizes, certifications</i>	0	0.0
<i>(P) Budget</i>	0	13.2
<i>(Q) Tender contracts and bidding</i>	0	0.0
<i>(R) Networks with which the archive works and cooperates</i>	87.5	1.9

### *(G) Citizen charter*

All the citizen charters are designed to the same model and found both on each archive's page and on the Ministry's website. Readily located, they meet visibility and accessibility standards.

Their purpose is to explain archive services and quality commitments in connection with each, the interaction systems or mechanisms available to users (for complaints and suggestions), and the units of measure or indicators applied to verify the degree to which the commitments are honoured. The document (regarded as a transparency indicator) is very complete in that respect and includes some of the indicators established for this study (such as user rights and a collection classification chart).

All but one of the citizen charters are updated to 2017, the exception being the 'Corona de Aragón', for which the services listed refer to the period 2013–2016.

### *(I) Collection classification or organisational chart*

Inasmuch as classification is a fundamental archivist task and the tool for describing archives (López Gómez et al. 2012, p. 64), this information was logically found on all the archive websites to provide researchers, citizens and the archive itself with information on the manner in which its document collections are systematised and grouped.

### *(J) Staff directory*

While found under the menu item 'Organisational chart', it does not conform to the definition of these documents. None of the archive websites contains such a chart, understood to be a graphic representation of organisational structure, showing the relationships among its departments or units, the function of each and the people involved. While all the archives name their professional staff in hierarchical order by category, this information does not constitute an organisational chart per se and as a mere list of the organisation's personnel is insufficient. The 'Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid' has one such document on its website.

### *(R) Networks with which the archive works and cooperates*

Directors regard cooperation as indispensable for the future of archives (García Lozano et al. 2007, p. 296). This indicator was found on 87.5% of the archive websites in the form of both the Archive Census-Guide and the PARES logotype, an indication of membership in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport's project for publication on the internet of the historic document heritage custodied in Spain's archive network (López Cuadrado 2016).

### *(C) Executive body*

This is the unit within the organisation that discusses work projects and other technical issues involved in archive development. Its membership includes the

institution's senior officials. No reference was found to this unit in the information furnished by the archives themselves, even though the authors had indirect proof of its existence in some.

Information on the body or commission participating in archive administration and management, namely the Board of Trustees with its members and secretary, was found in only three cases. This collegiate administrative body, which answers to the central government, is entrusted with approving the yearly action plan; monitoring plan implementation, acquisition programmes, conservation and digital preservation of the document collections; and presenting the yearly report of activities.

Three archive websites include a link to 'projects underway' for their document collections. The 'Corona de Aragón' is engaging in the revision and amendment of descriptive fields and levels to facilitate the international exchange of information and the connection between PARES and the European Archive Website through the APEX project. The Simancas Archive is adding information on conservation, description and dissemination projects. The project underway at the 'Real Chancillería de Valladolid' addresses the description of a number of document groupings.

## Transparency in provincial historic archives

Provincial historic archive websites also exhibited a paucity of indicators, although the situation was more heterogeneous, with a greater number and variety of documents than found on the national sites. The indicators detected, in descending order of frequency, are discussed below.

(I) *Collection classification chart*, with 88.7%, was followed by G) *Citizen charter* (37.7%) and (E) *Specific regulations on service operation* (30.2%). The provincial archives in Cuenca, Guadalajara and Toledo published updated service quality indicators in their citizen charters, with data through the first half of 2017.

The websites for the nine archives in the Castile-Leon region contained the same *mission statement* and were the only ones where the indicator was published on the main website. (A) *Mission statements*, which describe a service's purpose or *raison d'être*, are normally defined when addressing strategic planning, vision or values. They should be revisited from time to time and adapted to the prevailing circumstances. The aforementioned did not conform to those criteria (Corral 2005, p. 16). The La Rioja Provincial Archive's mission statement was found under the 'Services' item on its website, and in its list of commitments.

Indicator (K), *Staff directory*, which furnishes e-mail addresses for all archive personnel, was present on 22.6% of the websites, in some cases under the option 'Administrative structure'.

Indicator (N), *Yearly report*, was identified on 18.9% of the sites. Given that this is a document routinely formulated (Cruces Blanco 2006, p. 4), its scant presence on archive websites is surprising. Where complete, this review and balance sheet of the activities conducted throughout the year may contain information pertinent to an organisation's overall accountability. The areas addressed include service use statistics; indicators; results of user satisfaction surveys; achievement of strategic plan objectives; cooperation projects; yearly user-related data; hours and facilities;

and economic and financial information in connection with the budget approved and implemented, itemising revenue, expenses and investment and the resources allocated to plans and projects. Not all the reports located were up to date, as the latest available should refer to 2016. The Provincial Archive of Alicante published one such report.

At 13.2%, indicator (*P*), *Budget*, was published on the websites of only a few Andalusian archives. Found under the option 'Archive facts and figures', it contained a standardised form with the data required by the Regional Government of Andalusia on expenses, investments and subsidies.

Although many archive websites contain an e-form for filing complaints or suggestions, very few (9.4%) publish information on (*M*) *Satisfaction surveys*, with users' opinions of service quality. Only the provincial archives in the Castile-La Mancha region provided such information, which was not recent in all cases. The results for Cuenca and Guadalajara, for instance, were updated to 2016.

Only one case each was located for the following indicators.

- (*B*) *Strategic plan* The Archive and Document Heritage Service of Navarra publishes its plan for 2015–2019. Designed for the region of Navarra's entire archive system, the plan lists its objectives as including system consolidation, recognition and dissemination of the document heritage and implementation of its 'secure electronic archive'.
- (*J*) *Organisational chart* The 'Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid's' chart, while very simple, provides a satisfactory graphic depiction of the organisation.
- (*H*) *Document policy* The Provincial Archive of Asturias provides this information in a document entitled 'Document management and reception policy'.

Other regulatory documents that might be regarded as collection indicators were found on the Castile-Leon historic archive website. Under the option "professional area", this site provides a link to technical information on conservation rules and timeframes for regional government documents, the archivist descriptions to be adopted by all institutions pertaining to the Castile-Leon archive system and other technical instructions and useful resources for archives. More specifically, the document on conservation rules and timeframe regulates and monitors document life cycles, stipulates rules for appropriately and comprehensively conserving heritage documents and monitoring their exponential growth, and establishes and standardises archive-managed documentary series, studying the procedure through which they were generated.

(*R*) *Networks with which the archive works and cooperates* Although the logotypes denoting network membership were not always found on these archives' sites (hence the insignificant presence of this indicator), all the regional archive system websites highlighted the importance of collaboration and partnering. Proof of that was found, for instance, in the Regional Government of Andalusia's technical instructions on e-document management, which while not mentioned in all the regional archives' sites, are shared across Andalusia and available on the general website for the region. Another example is the conservation timeframe in place for the Regional Government of Extremadura's archives. These documents, formulated

by the Documentary Assessment Commission, are applied after approval to all the archives in the system. Reports have also been published on experiences involving inter-archive collaboration and partnering (Madsen Visiedo 2017).

## Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the presence of the transparency indicators proposed on the websites of Spanish historic archives are discussed below.

- While this study casts no doubts on the existence in archives of the transparency-related documents identified as indicators, it shows that they are not published on archive websites. Users are entitled to access that information, which may be of public interest.
- The websites for all the national archives are readily accessible, although that is not true of the transparency documents which, when present, are scattered across different links. Access to provincial archive sites involves a longer pathway, and the web address is not always easy to locate. Document scatter is a feature shared with the national archive sites.
- Although no transparency standards are in place for archives, on the grounds of the indicators proposed, the information furnished on their websites can be described as very scanty, particularly as regards planning and assessment. None of the sites feature plans from which current priority objectives could be established or the method for measuring results deduced.
- The indicators Collection classification chart, Citizen charter, Regulations and Directory were present on all the national archive websites. The statistics published by the Ministry provide information on archive activities (queries, visits, document types and services offered) but lack data on other areas of interest, such as budgetary expenses and investments. The absence on websites of a strategic plan specifying priorities is surprising, inasmuch as such plans are among the ‘institution’s organisational management’ functions (Sanchis Moreno 2009). That the yearly report of activities and budget was missing is similarly surprising.
- A wider variety and larger number of transparency indicators were found on provincial than national archives’ websites, although they were present on a smaller percentage of websites. The indicators found most commonly but not consistently in all these archives were the same as listed for the national institutions.
- No information was available on historic archives’ budgets. The data on Ministry funding for the national archives had to be sought in the National Budget. Of the provincial archives, only the Andalusian institutions furnished budgetary information on their websites. For all other regions, it had to be gleaned from the respective budgets.
- This overview would appear to show that archives, which focus so intensely on the transparency of the organisations they serve, fail to realise that as public institutions and departments they also should embrace transparency commitments.

The LTAIPBG and related literature foster transparency in public institutions. Websites are an essential tool for providing citizens with information. Archives, whether or not they are bound by the Act could, as publicly funded and subsidised institutions, make a voluntary effort to enhance their transparency by including the management-related indicators proposed hereunder on their websites. Although the effect that may have cannot be ascertained, the effort would be wholly justified. Given that the International Council on Archives' Strategic Direction 2008/18 states in its Vision that archive management is an essential precondition for 'administrative transparency' (ICA 2008), its own management transparency may be safely assumed to be supported by the archivists concerned.

The institution of a consensus on the indicators used to determine compliance with the Act's 'active publicity' would be an advisable next step. The analysis and discussion of such indicators with professional archivists would help adapt MESTA to archives' specific practice and build it into a transparency measurement tool. Agreements such as the one on management indicators for local government archives (Alcalde 2010), established after study and debate by a working party on local archives with a view to furnishing a model for archive assessment and planning, would be highly recommendable.

The proposal put forward in this paper and its application to a sample of historic archives broaches the type of information to be made available to users or interested citizens and a first step towards archives' institutional transparency. In addition to supporting the transparency of the institutions they serve, archives should themselves be transparent. They would do well to emulate the good practice exhibited by a growing number of libraries, organisations that also manage information, which are presently engaging in just such a transparency exercise.

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## **Appendix: List of the institutions and their websites**

National archives managed by the Secretariat of State for Culture:

- Archivo de la Corona de Aragón
- Archivo General de Simancas
- Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid
- Archivo General de Indias
- Archivo Histórico Nacional
- Archivo General de la Administración
- Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica
- Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza

Provincial archives state-owned, managed by the respective autonomous region:



#### Andalucía:

- Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Granada
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Almería
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Córdoba
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Granada
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Huelva
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Jaén
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Málaga
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla

#### Aragón:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Huesca
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Teruel
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza

#### Asturias:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Asturias

#### Islas Baleares:

- Archivo del Reino de Mallorca
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Mahón

#### Canarias:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Santa Cruz de Tenerife

#### Cantabria:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cantabria

#### Castilla La Mancha:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Albacete
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ciudad Real
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cuenca
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Guadalajara
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Toledo

Castilla y León:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ávila
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Burgos
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de León
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Palencia
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Salamanca
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Segovia
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Soria
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Valladolid
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zamora

Cataluña:

- Arxiu Històric de Girona
- Arxiu Històric de Lleida
- Arxiu Històric de Tarragona
- Dipòsit d'Arxius de Cervera

Extremadura:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Badajoz
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cáceres

Galicia:

- Archivo del Reino de Galicia
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Lugo
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ourense

Archivo Histórico Provincial de Pontevedra  
Madrid:

- Archivo Histórico de Protocolos

Murcia:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Murcia

Navarra:

- Archivo Real y General de Navarra

País Vasco:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Álava
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Bizkaia

Archivo Histórico Provincial de Gipuzkoa  
La Rioja:

- Archivo Histórico Provincial de La Rioja

Valencia:

- Archivo del Reino de Valencia
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Alicante
- Archivo Histórico Provincial de Castellón

Melilla:

- Archivo Histórico de Mellilla.

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